

REMARKS

Pending Claims

By this amendment claims 1, 2, 3, 9, 21, 25, 32, 33, 34 and 44 are amended, and claims 12 and 36 are cancelled. Claim 32 was canceled in a previous response. Claims 1-11, 13-31, 33-35 and 37-46 remain pending. Applicant respectfully requests entry of the above amendments and consideration of the following remarks.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. According to the Examiner it was unclear what was meant by “operation” of the control cable in line 12 of the previous version of claim 1. By this amendment, claim 1 is amended to recite that “*movement* of the control cable moves the ramp carriage assembly.” Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 has been overcome and may therefore be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-2, 12-15, 20-24, 36-39, and 45-46 as obvious under Cohn et al. (USP 6,010,298) in view of Redding et al. (USP 5,160,236). However, in light of the amendments and arguments presented herein, Applicant respectfully submits that the rejections are rendered moot and requests that the rejections be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Claim 1 as amended recites a retractable ramp system comprising, among other elements, a frame including guide shafts, and a ramp carriage assembly for moving a ramp platform, the ramp carriage assembly including linear bearings translational along the guide shafts and pivot arms connected with the linear bearings. The pivot arms are in turn pivotably connected with the ramp platform. As discussed at page 13 lines 15-24 of the specification, the linear bearings and guide shafts allow the ramp carriage to travel in a smooth, linear motion from the stowed to the deployed position (see also Figs. 1a and 5b).

The amendment to claim 1 incorporates much of the language from claim 12, therefore the following comments specifically address the Examiner’s rejection of claim 12 in the October 16, 2007 Office action. According to the Examiner, Cohn discloses guide shafts (46), linear bearings (88), and pivot arms (84). However, the “linear bearings” (88) of Cohn are in fact

circular roller bearings that “function[] as a cam follower located between and influenced by the guide bars 46 and the bottom bearing flange support 54.” (See Cohn, col. 8, lines 4-8). Furthermore, the bearings (88) of Cohn do not move linearly but instead follow the serpentine profile of the lower edge of the guide bars 46 to control the angle of the ramp platform with respect to the rectangular enclosure 24. (See Cohn, col. 10, lines 52-60 and Figs. 10-15). Thus, the combined teachings of the cited references fail to teach or suggest all of the elements of claim 1, in particular, the cited references fail to teach or suggest linear bearings translational along guide shafts and pivot arms connected with the linear bearings and pivotably connected with the ramp platform.

For similar reasons, amended claim 21 is allowable over the cited art. Elements of former claim 36 have been incorporated into claim 21 to claim a method of operating a retractable ramp system that includes moving a ramp platform with a ramp carriage assembly, which in turn includes translating linear bearings along guide shafts, the linear bearings connected to pivot arms pivotably connected to the ramp platform. The Examiner rejected claim 33 as obvious in view of the combination of Cohn and Redding. However, as discussed above, this combination of references does not teach or suggest translating linear bearings along guide shafts.

The Examiner has rejected claims 43 and 44 as obvious in view of Tremblay (USP 5,636,399). However, in view of the arguments and amendment of claim 44 presented herein, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections be reconsidered and withdrawn. With respect to claim 43, Tremblay does not teach or suggest *dropping* wheels of a ramp flap *into a cutout* defined in the ramp platform when the ramp platform deploys. Rather, Tremblay teaches that when the platform is deployed rollers 48 ride off of side edges 90, 92 and onto a threshold section 78. The hinged panel 44 is thereafter “supported on” the threshold section 78 such that the outer edge 38 of the platform is below the top panel 14 of the platform. (See Tremblay, col. 5 lines 5-12). Tremblay further explains that the threshold section 78 and the platform 12 are “rigidly connected” at an offset angle. (Tremblay, col. 4, lines 50-53). Thus, the rollers 48 of Tremblay are not dropped into a cutout defined in the ramp platform, but instead roll over the angled threshold section 78. As such, Tremblay fails to teach or suggest all of the elements of claim 43.

With respect to amended claim 44 Tremblay does not teach or suggest engaging a bracket with a portion of a ramp platform and rotating a ramp flap into a horizontal position *with a force*

provided by the bracket. As discussed on page 16 lines 26-29 of the specification, when the ramp platform 12 retracts for stowage, wedge shaped brackets 60 ride against wear plates 66 connected to the ramp platform 12 and push the ramp flap 52 upwardly into horizontal position. Tremblay does not teach or suggest such structure in part because, as discussed above, the rollers 48 of Tremblay remain in continuous engagement with the threshold section 78 when the ramp platform is deployed. (See Tremblay, col. 7, lines 12-14). Thus, as the platform of Tremblay retracts, the rollers 48 roll along the threshold section 78 and back onto the side edges 90, 92. Tremblay therefore fails to teach or suggest all of the elements of amended claim 44, in particular, engaging a bracket with a portion of a ramp platform and rotating a ramp flap into a horizontal position with a force provided by the bracket.

Allowable Subject Matter

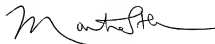
Applicants note with appreciation the indication that claims 3, 9, 25, and 33 contain allowable subject matter, and have rewritten those claims in independent form. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 3, 9, 25 and 33 are therefore allowable.

The remaining claims are allowable for at least the reason that they depend from an allowable claim.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, allowance of the claims is respectfully requested. The undersigned is available for telephone consultation during normal business hours.

Respectfully submitted,



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